

REMARKS

Claims 1-5 have been examined and have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

I. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) in view of in view of U.S. Publication No. 2001/0028129 to Oono et al. (“Oono”) and JP 09039025 to Kobayashi et al. (“Kobayashi”) (both assigned to Dai Nippon Printing Co., Ltd.)

The Examiner has again rejected claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Oono in view of Kobayashi.

A. Claim 1

Claim 1 recites,

“said clasper comprises a pushing frame that abuts on said parting surface of said female mold via said decorative sheet when said decorative sheet is pressed and fastened, and at least one connecting member connecting said pushing frame and means of driving said pushing frame, wherein:

said clasper is formed in such a shape that, when said pushing frame is in abutment with said parting surface of said female mold, there is established a space between said connecting member and said parting surface in which said clamping devices can pass through.” (emphasis added)

The Examiner acknowledges that Oono fails to disclose the claimed space, but again contends that Kobayashi cures the deficient teaching. Specifically, the Examiner refers to the sheet guide grooves 82 of Kobayashi and maintains that it would be obvious to provide such grooves in the molding apparatus of Oono (pg. 5 of Office Action). In the September 24, 2009 Response, Applicant argued that the alleged space 82 is not provided between the parting surface 31c and the connecting member (portion of element 50). Rather, the sheet guide grooves 82 (alleged space) are formed *within* the female mold 30 itself and thus form a cavity within the

female mold 30. Thus, when the sheet clamp 50 is in abutment with the parting surface 31c, there is no space actually “established” between the two elements, as recited in claim 1. In other words, the sheet guide grooves 82 are not established by having the two elements in abutment and since the grooves are formed within or inside the female mold 30, the alleged space is not formed, in any manner, by the parting surface 31c itself.

In view of the above, Applicant argued that even if one skilled in the art were motivated to provide the sheet guide grooves 82 of Kobayashi into the device of Oono, such grooves would be provided inside mold 2 at a position *behind* the alleged parting surface 2b (see Fig. 16 of Oono). Thus, the claimed space would not be established by the alleged combination.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner responds to the above arguments by referring to Figure 11 of Kobayashi (pg. 16 of Office Action). Figure 11 depicts the opening for the guide groove 82. The Examiner alleges that the exposed surface of the female mold 30 is the claimed parting surface. As set forth in claim 1, however, the parting surface is a surface on which the clasper *abuts* via the decorative sheet. In the entire exposed surface of the female mold 30, alleged to disclose the claimed parting surface, neither the decorative sheet 15 nor the clasper 50 abuts the female mold. Thus, Applicant again submits that the guide grooves 82 fail to disclose the claimed space.

On page 17 of the Office Action, the Examiner also alleges that the fact that the clamping device fits into a space “within” the female mold is immaterial as Applicant’s claim language is open ended. Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner’s assertion. In particular, while claim 1 does not preclude the introduction of additional features, the claim is clear in regard to the configuration of the claimed space. Since the guide grooves 82, formed within the female

mold 32 of Kobayashi, fail to teach or suggest the claimed configuration, the reference fails to cure the deficient teachings of Oono.

In further regard to the above, Applicant notes that if the guide grooves 82 of Kobayashi were provided in the device of Oono, such grooves would likewise be placed within the female mold of Oono. Such configuration has a problem in that if the clamping devices become offset, they have the possibility of becoming stuck within the grooves. Since the clamping devices of the present invention move through an open space, such issue is of no concern.

At least based on the foregoing, Applicant submits that claim 1 is patentable over the cited references.

B. Claims 2-4

Applicant submits that claims 2-4 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency and/or incorporation of the features of claim 1.

Furthermore, claim 3 recites, “feeding said decorative sheet between said male mold and said female mold by moving said clamping devices of said transport chuck with said decorative sheet being clamped by said clamping devices, pressing and fastening said sheet onto said parting surface by said clasper, releasing the grasping of said sheet by said clamping devices while maintaining the pressed state, and bringing said clamping devices back to their original position through the space between said clasper and said female mold.”

The Examiner acknowledges that Oono fails to disclose the above features, but contends that Kobayashi does. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. For example, as shown in Figure 8 of Kobayashi, when an outer end of the sheet clamp 50 starts to push the projection 95 on the edge of the arm 88a of the sheet holder 88, the other inner end of the sheet clamp 50 has

not yet reached the surface of the sheet 15. In other words, the sheet 15 is released before the sheet 15 is pressed and fastened onto the parting surface. On the contrary, as recited in claim 3, the sheet is pressed and fastened onto the parting surface of the female mold by the clasper and then the clamping devices are withdrawn (while maintaining the pressed state).

At least based on the foregoing, Applicant submits that claim 3 is patentable over the cited reference.

C. Claim 5

Applicant submits that claim 5 is patentable for at least analogous reasons as claim 1.

II. Newly Added Claim

By this Amendment, Applicant has added claim 6 to provide more varied protection of the present invention. Applicant submits that claim 6 is patentable for at least analogous reasons as set forth above for claims 1 and 3.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.114(c)
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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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